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## THE WELL-SPRINGS OF REALITY.

THE term "reality" here includes all phases of actual experience, "inner" or mental, "outer" or perceptual ; in short, all modes whatever of what we call knowledge or consciousness. An inquiry into the well-springs of reality is, therefore, an inquiry into the grounds of the genesis and content of consciousness, and is, as all such attempts must be, metaphysical. It is, indeed, impracticable for any hater of metaphysics to moot such an inquiry without stultifying himself, for the solution of the riddle is itself metaphysics. Not without amusement do I note the number of agnostics, positivists, materialists, and others who have failed to realise this fact, and no doubt most of my readers must have been similarly regaled. It must suffice now merely to emphasise its importance.

In Part II of my *Riddle of the Universe* I have endeavored to show that any solution of this *crux* must be *idealistic*, that is to say, must find the ultimate ground of reality to be essentially the same as consciousness. I say "essentially" the same because, as I have shown at length, the ground, though illuminated in and as consciousness, is not as *prius* itself conscious, but *meta* or *superconscious*, potentiality, not actuality. I have farther shown—and as yet I have found no critic resolute or honest enough to face my arguments—that this ground is no mere Hegelian idea, wherein numerical difference is lost, but rather a unity-plurality, demanding the formulation of a monistic monadology as the basic truth of philosophy. In no sense can this idealistic ground be regarded as *reason*, as so many modern echoers of Hegel declare. And in no sense, again, can reason be said to mediate the production of our own sensuous experience.

These are all positions of leading importance, and I propose here to offer some observations which bear upon them. But of necessity my allusions must be fragmentary. Those who desire a fuller survey of them will find this in my already published work and the forthcoming volume of essays which I am now preparing for the press.

What, then, in the first place, is our warrant for accepting idealism at all? Assuredly this—that we must found our thinking on experience, and experience is no other than states of consciousness. Mind and world, mental facts, and object facts *differ*, it is true, in notable regards (and the differences have been frequently catalogued by thinkers), but they agree in the all-important point, which overrides all else, of being states or determinations of a subject. The *idea* I have of a tree is no more and no less a phase of my subject than is the original *perception* of which it is an echo. I see no possible way of escape from this position. Of course, we must not, like the so-called psychological idealists, make the world an appearance only within “mind”; “mind” is a general name for a fluctuating *series* of states historically later than the first sensations, and so no possible container or producer of these. In contrast to this view it will be necessary to maintain that “mind” and “world” subsist only in relation within the individual ego or monad, the spiritual ground of those two contrasted aspects. But here an objection may be entered. “By what right,” it may be asked, “do you speak of an *individual* monad?” Echoers of Hegel and his like will be, of course, up in arms. In answer to these objectors I will point out that on their own showing philosophy should be only the rethinking and rereading of the “given” or experience, and that this experience *itself decides the problem*. Nothing is more certain than that this experience exhibits our “selves” as radically self-contained or impervious; *A*’s consciousness never penetrating that of *B*, or *vice versa*. In “I am I”—a *feeling* not a thought, and a feeling realised far more vividly in the presence of things than thoughts<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Things,” not being thoughts, but determinations of the *contrasted* object-consciousness.

—we have the individuality of the individual proclaimed outright. That which distinguishes between “mind” and “world,” and yet at the same time reveals itself *in them and through them*, is no vague “subject of consciousness in general” as some latter-day idealists still fondly believe, but a monad, that is to say, a unitary centre of consciousness, actual *or potential*.<sup>1</sup> So clearly does experience warrant this standpoint that one may well be at a loss to discover why the vague subject “in general” was ever posited at all. Without doubt, so far as Western philosophy is concerned, we have to thank the Post-Kantians for this dubious boon; the rush for *conceptual abstractions* having for long been dominant. Hegel, indeed, in elevating the concept into the *prius* and striving in grotesque fashion to exhibit it as the very substance and driving power of the universe, brought idealism finally into the gravest disrepute. In assailing his arid panlogism, Schopenhauer did most useful work, but he, too, was too impressed with the “in general” bias to pluralise adequately the WILL which was to oust the concept. He paved the way, however, unwittingly for a rehabilitation of a monadology such as was outlined by Leibnitz, as from a different standpoint did Herbart. This rehabilitation I have endeavored to promote still further; the first fruits of it being already before the critics. Numerous as are the contentions that buttress this attempt, they pale, however, so far as concerns man, before the testimony to monadism furnished by our ordinary workaday consciousness. The individual monad or subject, in short, is a *datum*; the universal subject contended for by some *may* be a figment and can at best receive only indirect inferential support. All we know immediately is—ourselves.

Positing a subject as ground, source, and sustainer of our fugitive states of consciousness is no longer, I opine, avoidable. As I have argued at length elsewhere, “No subject, no flux of sensations; no subject, no order of sensations in space; no subject, no memory, no expectation; no subject, no introspection; no subject,

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<sup>1</sup> The actually conscious segment being comparable to a star-point seen against the vast dark background of the sky.

no explicit I-reference." The necessity of positing a subject is, however, admitted by most modern idealists, though touching the questions of its unity, consciousness, and rationality as *prius* great disputes obtain. Many Neo-Hegelians posit only one "eternally complete" and *rational* consciousness as ground of experience in general—this implies a peculiar theism which lends itself usefully to thinkers anxious not to seem heterodox. Schopenhauer, again, denied the rationality of his *prius*, the blind and unconsciously world-spinning will. Other idealists, again, object to will as much as they do to reason when adduced as *prius*, and seek refuge in a consciousnessless spontaneous ground of which "will" and "reason" are at best mere phenomenal aspects. Probably the ultimate decision of philosophy will be in favor of a monistic monadology, embodying this latter view. I have already pointed out that a *merely* monistic ground is at variance with the experience on which all philosophy must found.

To return, however, to our view of idealism, the view that reality, as well mental as physical, is appearance in a monad, we find ourselves face to face with an obviously subjective idealism. And dwelling especially on the *crux* of physical reality, we seem forced to include everything within our monads. To a certain extent this course would be justified. But when once we have decided that perceptions are states of ourselves, there arises the further question as to how these perceptions are produced, how experience of the "outer" sort is possible. Why in short seeing that these perceptions are only states of our monads, do we have them after the actual fashion and manner in which they arise? The monad in *becoming conscious* clearly unfurls itself, but why in the way of which we are momentarily aware? In the answer to this problem we may, as I have shown, find a clue to the secrets of the universe.

The answer lies in a monadology and is too elaborate to condense within the limits of a brief paper. It includes, of course, the explanation of the working of those bodily, or rather cerebral monads, in relation to which our monads pass into consciousness. Ignoring this explanation, it is at present of chief moment to make it clear in what way the positing of these subordinate monads can be

justified. I answer in the following way, limitations of treatment being, of course, here inevitable.

Subjective idealism must of necessity find prominent recognition in philosophy—primarily and immediately “the world is *my* presentment.” But I believe that beyond the pale of my monad or subject, other human subjects are perceiving, willing, and thinking, and this belief, the product of association, is involuntarily thrust upon me, enforcing my practical allegiance to it. It is only in the study that a Fichte or Hume questions the actuality of “selves” other than himself, in the market-place inseparable associations leave him no option. My readers, however, not questioning the accuracy of the belief, it remains to ask them to exploit it. By dint of the following argument we may achieve an important result, enabling subjective idealism to receive an objective idealist supplement reconciling it adequately with the fullest demands of vulgar common sense. I cite a passage from my *Riddle of the Universe*, for which I cannot at present offer a better substitute :

“As an aspect of its content, the subject holds before itself the world, the whole play of perceived objective relations. But scattered through this consciousness are various objects (human and animal organisms) which invite extra-experiential reference to corresponding ejects. Now the validity of this reference is not denied by the wildest sceptic. Inasmuch, however, as this reference is based on observed changes in the objects, it follows that *specific* changes within *my subject* are *symptomatic of changes beyond its sphere*. Thus the shifting contorted features of an angry man are nothing more for my subject than so many colors, lights, and shades, having varying positions in space, and recalling the usual bundles of interpretative mental states. They are simply phenomena of its consciousness. But they are phenomena with an extra-experiential reference to an angry consciousness of which *I have no direct experience*, but which is as real as my consciousness that seeks to symbolise it. The conclusion is, therefore, inevitable that, as certain changes in my subject cohere with other changes beyond its sphere, the transcendent validity of causality must be held established. This result cannot be ignored by idealism.

“And now let us look further. The indices of the changes taking place in other subjects are, as above stated, changes in our perceptual consciousness of objects. But suppose a case where, from pathological or other reasons, the movements of a face have no longer a true reference to a consciousness beyond our experience. Suppose, in short, that the man goes to sleep. What then? Does the *mere* temporary eclipse of that alien consciousness rid our perceptions of their prior extra-

experiential reference? Are we to suppose that for this trivial reason the play of our shifting percepts no longer answers to an activity beyond experience? This is just what we cannot do. Having already *a posteriori* proof of the transcendent validity of causality, we shall endow it with a yet further significance. We shall contend that the changes in our perceptions are somehow allied with extra-experiential changes to which the eclipse of the alien consciousness makes only an inconsiderable difference. At last an activity other than that of a human subject is in evidence. We must recognise that *the changes correspond to activities not in the consciousness of another human subject, but to activities with which that consciousness is normally only associated.* Thus indeed are we able to establish the activities of what are ordinarily spoken of as the noumena of objects; for the same reasoning which holds good of the organism correlated with the eclipsed consciousness *holds good of all objects alike.*"

At first sight it might appear that we are only able to make good Kantian "things-in-themselves" as the occult causes or part-causes of our perceptions. And in a sense it is true that things-in-themselves admit of a vindication if we follow up this clue. Unquestionably the activities treated of obtain *independently of our consciousness*, are, indeed, part-causes of the mode in which that consciousness actually unfolds. But, on the other hand, these things-in-themselves are no *surds* or unknowable *x*'s, but essentially the same as what we know as consciousness—activities in short of a spiritual but a-conscious sort. An assertion of this kind may seem out of keeping with a philosophy which founds and builds wholly on experience. But really the reverse is the truth, for if experience is a system of variously related states of consciousness and never, *ex hypothesi* anything else, any activity which we can moot must be expressed in terms of consciousness. And in fact the wretched *abstractions* "matter," "force," "energy," "unknown substance," etc., etc., on which materialists and the rest base their creeds, are themselves only names connoting aspects of the ordered *states of consciousness* we call "world." They are names only for *phases of our object-consciousness* divorced from the variety of other phases in connexion with which they are known. The fact is, that so far from being able to posit any activity *alien* in essence to consciousness we cannot possibly even moot this activity except in words. It is *not even present* to our intellect or imagination as a subject which can be

discussed—it is wholly and absolutely a *verbal myth*. We have arrived, then, at this position.

1. There are activities which are to be posited as obtaining independent of my consciousness or any human consciousness.

2. These activities are spiritual, i. e., essentially the same as consciousness, though probably *without self-feeling*; consciousness, as I have shown elsewhere, being a mere *star-point* visible over against the indefinitely vast background of the Metaconscious.

So far, so good. But now it is necessary to make our knowledge of these extra-experiential activities *more precise*. Are they *aspects* only of some unitary spiritual whole such as the “idea” of Hegel or the “unconscious” of Von Hartmann; or are they energies of monads—of plural centres of consciousness (actual *or potential*)—the question of the relation of these monads to a universal subject remaining over for later treatment? Following up the clue given by causality, an *empirically acquired* but provably effectively, we may proceed to establish a monadology.

Obviously from our knowledge of the human monad—the individuality of which is self-revelatory—the presupposition is in favor of the positing of monads in other domains than the human, and coming to interpret the results of science we find that monads, and monads alone, can serve as an even plausible interpretation of these results. This is especially noticeable in the case of chemistry, the atomic doctrine at present a mere *scaffolding of symbols* being adequately transformed and brilliantly illumined by monadology. That this theory, formulated to cope with most varied and most remarkably convergent streams of evidence, is *merely* a stage in Reason’s interpretation of itself, as Hegelian abstractionists have to hold, is one of those absurdities that have made metaphysic a laughing-stock. It is much more than this, a very abstract presentment of the relations of monads, viewed, as the *interests* of men of science require, in a dominantly *mechanical regard*. The irony of destiny appears here when we contemplate atomist theory. The terms in which atomic relations are discussed are all drawn from observation of activities within our own consciousness, and, indeed, could have no other origin, and necessarily, therefore, in many cases have a



*notoriously subjective import* ("affinity," "attraction," "preference," "repulsion," etc., etc.). We may, in fact, affirm that the monadologist only clears up with full reflective consciousness what many a hostile man of science grasps confusedly. An entire rethinking of chemistry and physics on monadological lines will doubtless be one of the leading feats of the next century. A work of such a character would be of momentous interest and one valid page of it would outweigh all the arid scholasticism of Hegel's "logic" and that of the modern guild-philosophers who have smothered idealism in words in the hope of exalting "reason."

Monadology is obviously an enormous subject, and I do not, of course, pretend here to do more than indicate aspects of this fact. Much has been already done by Leibnitz, Herbart, and others, and I, too, have done my humble best to strengthen and extend monadist doctrine. But by far the greater part of the work remains over for others to complete. With a vital meaning for the *crucis* of external perception (normal and supernormal), of freedom, of the neurosis-psychosis relation, of sensation-genesis, of ethics, theism, pessimism, the world-purpose, import of the individual, etc., etc., and, indeed, of all metaphysical questions whatever, monadology may well task the most earnest efforts of the inquirer. Monads, human, subhuman, superhuman, are the WELL-SPRINGS OF REALITY, and no idealism ignoring them can prove adequate. Unlike Hegelianism, which never gets near a fact, and deludes the book-worm with word-spinning and hollow dialectic, monadology admits of exploration by induction on the lines of the complete method.<sup>1</sup> Once established in decently adequate fashion it must appeal to every storm-tost wayfarer as the phrases of academic scholasticism never did and never will. The "riddle of this painful world" as treated by the guild-philosophers breeds pessimism and disgust with metaphysic. Interpreted by a severely critical monadology, it will be found to lose its forbidding aspect. I am, of course, only in favor

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<sup>1</sup> Doubters may be referred, in passing, to the pregnant declaration of Mill, *Exam. of Sir W. Hamilton's Philosophy*, p. 259, 5th edition, for the timely observation that induction is not necessarily confined to the sphere of the individual consciousness.

of admitting results where the latter are enforced by careful inquiry (though some of my less honest or more lazy critics have thought fit to say otherwise). The consolatory aspect of a doctrine should be obviously only an afterthought.

Before closing this paper I should like to say a few words touching the current Hegelian treatment of external perception, a treatment which a monadist rethinking of things seems to render wholly superfluous. As is so well known, Kant, anxious to import universality and necessity into the external experience, loosened by Hume, thought fit to assume various categories or "pure concepts," subsumed under which phenomena unified in space and time become *objective*. In the Kantian handling of this hypothesis, the categories are discussed as if superimposed by the ego on the phenomena (the "matter" of which is "given" and unified in space and time), and *importing into* them universality and necessity. With Hegel the categories are *immanent in* the phenomena, reason or the concept being implicit in nature previous to becoming explicit in our adult consciousness. It is urged that experience is not possible except on the lines thus indicated. A more absurd contention could scarcely be advanced.

On what ground is the category-doctrine defended? On this—no such categories, no experience such as we have. How are the categories got at, as they are never given unalloyed to the inquirer? By abstractly analytic reduction of experience to its "elements," obviously the only resource. But it is as well in this process to see that the "elements" arrived at were *really conjoined primarily* and are not mere figments of the philosopher. Take the so-called category of being. Now I would urge that no such category is immanent in objects at all—"being" is a general conception only empirically derived from observation of things. "Ah," says the Hegelian, "you forget that you cannot abstract from things what is not there to be abstracted!" This is a good objection, as it enables one to state the opposed view more clearly. The truth is that "being" is not a thought or concept *save for reflexion*; the being of things is a *feeling, a sensation*, and no thought or concept at all. And how does it arise? From the *concrete opposition* of its content to itself by which

the monad mediates its consciousness, an activity wholly alien to the *contemplative passive and abstract* character of reason. I am glad in this connexion to note that that able critic of Hegel, E. Belfort Bax, has in his *Problem of Reality* declared that being in the percept is not logical but alogical. Good this, but why does not Mr. Bax go further? Clearly, however, the Hegelian dialectic must suffer if being is thus treated as alogical. The starting point declared faulty, what of the succeeding journey? Mr. Bax's dictum should cause the Hegelians to rage.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Bax would retain nevertheless such categories as "causality," "substance," etc., as instruments wherewith his Subject of experience in general constructs our perceptions. This subject thinks the categories into the presentment, and *we* get the result as a ready-made world of objects. I have previously stated my objections to this "universal subject" theory and need not repeat them here. Even on monadist lines, however, it might be urged by Bax that categories latent in our subjects help to construct objects. But the hypothesis is superfluous. The *native* objectivity of sensation is admitted in his treatment of being, and, this important admission once made, the call for the other categories loses its force. For the rest we may rely on "association" as so richly expounded by British psychologists, such "association" (whether harking back to ancestral experiences or not) being viewed as reflexion in our central monads of the workings of the monads of our brains. As I have urged elsewhere :

"Not categories, but cerebral monads mediate the *fuller* objectivation of sensation into the ripe world we know ; their activities being passively duplicated in the subject [central monad] as the infant consciousness dawns. *Nerves and brain wirepull the adjustments of organisms to surroundings and the reflex of this adjustive mechanism in the subject is the very process of the fuller objectivation itself.*"—*Riddle of the Universe*, p. 337.

While dwelling on this point, I will add that a grave mistake

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<sup>1</sup> Stirling well observes, and the concession from him is striking, that Hegel's logic, "though containing much that is of *material* importance, is still principally *formal* . . . if the start be but an artifice and a convenience, is it all ascertained yet that the means of progress, the dialectic, is in any respect better?"

of the past, and, to a lesser extent, of the present, was and is the view that "relations" are necessarily generically other than the supposed terms they relate. It would be better to recognise "relations" as really only a kind of sensations as *particular* as the other sensations along with which we have them. "Being" in the object is a sensation, so, too, is "causality," which consists mainly, if not wholly, of ideal sensations of effort felt along with some time-sequence, and felt, too, with varying force *according to the nature of the time-sequence*; a most notable fact. A metaphysic of real utility should concern itself not with phantoms of the book-worm, such as categories, but with the origin of the many-hued concrete sensory experience whence these categories and indeed all concepts are ultimately derived. Conception is the process of "taking together" *agreeing aspects* of the given: a concept is the result, a name connoting this agreement. To say that we abstract concepts from things is not to say that the concepts are implicit *as such* in them, like plums ripe for picking. There is no concept "tree" in the perceived world, but only indefinitely numerous concrete trees which resemble each other in certain ways bearing on our interests and are classed accordingly. Similarly there are no concepts being and substance "realising themselves in multiplicity," as the phrase goes, in this world. There are certain phases of reality, certain powers of sensation in part primitive, in part acquired, which mingled inextricably with other sensations make up the concrete whole of sense. True every phase of this whole is related to every other, but this is because they are modes only of that *presentation-continuum* in which the *unitary subject* unfolds itself. Unrelated phases there are none, but the relations are in no sense "thoughts." Out of this continuum arise both "universals" and "particulars," and to inquire into its genesis should be the most studied aim of the metaphysician or mystic. Not fussing about empty "notions," but researches as to the genesis of the experience yielding the notion is the really important affair. From having certain sequences in our monads we probably get the notion of causality, but this notion, be it observed, in no way helps us to understand *why these sequences occur as they actually do*, why, for instance, a stone when released

falls to the ground. Here the notion-juggling Hegelians fail us, as they always do when any problem of real interest crops up. The only clue is that of monadology, exploited on the lines of the "complete" method and in full accord with psychology and physical science generally. At this point, however, conscious of having unduly extended my remarks, I must bid the reader adieu, trusting that he may find ultimately idealist monadology to be as competent to answer the world-riddle as I have. Stray hints are occasionally of value, and despite the exigencies of space it may be that one or two in this paper may find a permanent lodgment in minds open to conviction.

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